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Item 6 (h) of the provisional agenda*
Activities not classified by field: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

Elements of the policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2003 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission are set out in the present note, along with indications of the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The Commission may wish to review the actions taken and planned and assess whether they are appropriate in relation to the policy decisions of the Council.

* E/CN.3/2004/1.

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I. Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Action requested by the Council

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2003/6, regarding the follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, decided to take the necessary steps to implement the provisions of paragraph 46 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003, in which the Assembly requested each functional commission

> "to examine its methods of work in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits, recognizing that there is no need for a uniform approach since each functional commission has its own specificity, while also noting that modern methods of work can better guarantee the review of progress made in implementation at all levels, on the basis of a report with recommendations to be submitted by the Secretary-General to each functional commission and relevant subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council on their methods of work, in accordance with the provisions defined by the respective outcomes and relevant decisions taken by each body, bearing in mind the progress recently achieved in this regard by certain commissions, especially the Commission on Sustainable Development; the functional commissions and other relevant bodies of the Economic and Social Council should report to the Council no later than 2005 on the outcome of this examination".

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

Methods of work

2. It is an important feature of the methods of work of the Statistical Commission that it carries on its agenda a standing item on follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions and another on activities of the functional commissions of the Council and their possible implications for the work of the Commission. The Commission considers these items based on notes prepared by the Secretariat. Recent examples of such notes are:

(a) "Activities of the functional commissions that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission" (E/CN.3/2002/L.6);

(b) "Activities of the Commission for Social Development and their possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission" (E/CN.3/2003/32);

(c) "World Summit on Sustainable Development and its possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission" (E/CN.3/2003/33);

(d) "Activities of the Commission on Sustainable Development and their possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission" (E/CN.3/2004/32), which presents the implications for the Statistical Commission derived from the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session on its future programme and organization and methods of work, in particular its multi-year programme for the period from 2004/2005 to 2016/2017.

3. These notes are an important tool of cooperation and information-sharing between the Council and its subsidiary bodies in general, and the Statistical Commission in particular, and it is recommended that this kind of reporting be maintained.

4. Other aspects of the Statistical Commission's methods of work, such as the functioning of the Bureau and the preparation of a multi-year programme, were described in detail in E/CN.3/2002/L.5[1] and considered by the Commission at its thirty-third session. The Commission may wish to confirm that these methods of work are effective and suitable for the Statistical Commission.

Development indicators

5. In its resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27 the Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. Consequently, the Commission conducted a detailed technical review of conference indicators, the conclusions of which were presented to the Council.[2] Furthermore, at the request of the Council in its decision 2002/311, the Commission presented to the Council report E/2003/83.[3]

6. At its present, thirty-fifth session, the Commission remains seized of the issue of development indicators in support of major United Nations conferences and summits, and is considering a report of its Advisory Committee on Indicators (see E/CN.3/2004/24) and a report of the Secretary General on Millennium Development Goal indicators (E/CN.3/2004/23). The mechanism of the Advisory Committee on Indicators (composed of 13 countries) was created in order to strengthen the technical inputs from national statistical offices into the international conference indicator debate.

7. With respect to future work in the area of development indicators, it is suggested in E/CN.3/2004/24 that the Commission invite its Advisory Committee on Indicators to further review indicators in the areas of information and communication technologies and HIV/AIDS.

II. Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Action requested by the Council

8. The Council selected as the theme for its high-level segment in 2004 "Resource mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". The functional commissions are invited to contribute from their specific perspectives to the debate of the Council.

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

9. The Statistics Division recently published the *World Statistics Pocketbook — Landlocked Developing Countries*, containing data available as at 31 May 2003.[4] Furthermore, the Division had preliminary consultations with the Office of the High

Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States regarding the selection of appropriate data for monitoring progress towards the commitments of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries.

10. A further relevant statistical activity in this context, which will largely benefit least developed countries, is the Statistics Division's project on poverty measurement, which will result in a handbook entitled *Poverty Statistics: Concepts, Methods and Policy Use*, to be published in 2005.[5] The project will assist policy makers and statisticians in member countries to face the growing demand for poverty statistics and related information by building up a system of poverty measurement that is responsive to national and international data needs.

11. The Statistics Division has also launched a development account project for the period 2004-2006 in the Economic Community of West African States region to strengthen statistical capacity in that region. Several least developed countries will directly benefit from that initiative.

III. Mainstreaming gender perspectives

Action requested by the Council

12. In its resolution 2003/49 the Council called upon its subsidiary bodies to further intensify their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in their work and to continue their efforts to address gender perspectives in relation to the thematic issues of their multi-year programmes of work or in relation to annual themes. The Council called upon the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies to consider how best to facilitate specific gender discussions in their work and encouraged those bodies to increase their collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women. The Council also chose the topic "Review and appraisal of the system-wide implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system" as one of the cross-sectoral themes for the 2004 coordination segment.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

13. Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the range of development indicators considered by the Commission in the context of follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and United Nations conferences and summits, which is covered under item 6 (c) of the provisional agenda of the current session. The Division is responsible for coordinating the preparation of statistics for the Millennium Development Goal indicators. The database on Millennium Development Goal indicators maintained by the Division contains data broken down by sex to the extent possible.

14. With respect to proposed activities, the inter-agency expert group on Millennium Development Goal indicators has informed the Statistical Commission that one of the areas recommended for further work is the improvement of the framework for the assessment of the gender equality goal, through a review of the existing list of indicators and the development and proposal of new indicators. Also, the need to identify gender differentials in poverty measurements will be taken into account in the work for the creation of harmonized, integrated guidelines on

household income and consumption surveys to provide consistent, standardized measurement of poverty for national and international uses.

IV. Rural development in developing countries

Action requested by the Council

15. The Council has selected as the second theme for its 2004 coordination segment "Coordinated and integrated United Nations system approach to promote rural development in the developing countries with due consideration to least developed countries, for poverty eradication and sustainable development". In its resolution 57/270 B the General Assembly invited the functional commissions to contribute, from their perspectives, to the Council's assessment of the cross-sectoral thematic issues selected for the coordination segment.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

16. At its thirty-fourth session the Commission considered the agenda item on agricultural statistics on the basis of a comprehensive report presented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations[6] that described recent developments in agricultural statistics and future plans. The Commission "expressed support for future methodological development plans in food and agriculture statistics that would encompass broadening the scope of agricultural statistics, moving towards demand-side statistics and, more specifically, developing a framework of new concepts and methods for rural statistics".[7]

17. With respect to the common database maintained by the Statistics Division, all indicators for which it is applicable and feasible to disaggregate rural and urban data are presented separately for rural areas.

Notes

[1] See also the draft multi-year programme of work for the Statistical Commission 2004-2007, presented in E/CN.3/2004/31.

[2] See the progress report of the Secretary-General on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (E/2002/53).

[3] "Comprehensive report of the Statistical Commission on the work related to chapter VI, section E, of its report on its thirty-third session and on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels, including the report on indicators on means of implementation." At the time of the preparation of the present note, the Council had not yet taken a decision on the report, presented to it by the Statistical Commission.

[4] Series V, No. 25/LLDC, special issue, preliminary.

[5] See E/CN.3/2004/8.

[6] See E/CN.3/2003/11 and Corr.1.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. III.C, para. 6 (b).